

Therefore, happiness and suffering are not causeless and do not arise from incompatible causes such as a creator god.

Nagarjuna says in his **Precious Garland**:

*From non-virtues come all sufferings,
And likewise all bad migrations,
From virtues, all happy migrations
And the pleasures of all lives.*

2) The great increase of karma

Tibetan: ལམ་འཕེལ་ཆེ་བ། - *Lae phel che-wa* (*Lae* = action/karma, *phel[-wa]* = increase/growth, *che-wa* = great/big)

Karma also increases greatly. Even a small virtuous action can lead to great happiness whereas a small non-virtue can produce immense suffering.

Therefore, internal karmic causes yield far greater results than external causes.

The increase of karma is expressed by the following quotes:

The **Collection of Indicative Verses** says:

*Like a poison that has been ingested,
The commission of even a small non-virtue
Creates in your lives hereafter
Great fear and a terrible downfall.*

*As when grain ripens into a bounty,
Even the creation of small merit
Leads in lives hereafter to great happiness
And will be immensely meaningful as well.*

Also:

*Do not think that the commission
Of even a tiny non-virtue will not pursue you.
Just as a large vessel is filled
By falling drops of water,
So too is a fool filled up with non-virtue.
Accumulated a little at a time.*

*Do not think that the cultivation
Of even a tiny virtue will not pursue you.
Just as a large pot is filled
By falling drops of water,
So too are the steadfast filled up
By virtues accumulated a little at a time.*

3) One does not experience the result of an action one has not done

Tibetan: ལམ་མ་བྱས་པ་དང་མི་ཕྲད་པ། - *Lae ma chae-pa dang mi trae-pa* (*ma* = not, *chae-pa* = done, *dang* = and, *mi* = not, *trae-pa* = meet)

If we have not accumulated the karma that is the cause of experiencing happiness or suffering, we will not experience the happiness or suffering that is its result.

This explains why some people do not get cured from an illness despite sophisticated and prolonged treatment or why others become the lone survivors of an airplane crash.

4) Actions one has accumulated do not perish

Tibetan: ལས་ཀྱས་པ་ཚུད་མི་ཟ་བ། - *Lae chae-pa chue-mi-za-wa* (*chae-pa* = done, *chue-mi-za-wa* = does not perish/does not waste)

When we accumulate a karmic action a karmic imprint will be left in our mental continuum. In the case of a virtuous karmic imprint, unless it gets destroyed by anger and other delusions, the karmic imprint does not perish but will remain until it ripens. Likewise, in the case of a non-virtuous karmic imprint, unless it gets purified, it will not get destroyed but eventually produce its result. Therefore, karmic imprints may remain in our mental continuum for millions of eons before the causes and conditions for their ripening come together.

The **King of Concentration Sutra** says:

*Further, once you have committed an action, you will experience its effect;
And you will not experience the effects of what others have done.*

Furthermore, the **Bases of Discipline** says:

*Even in one hundred eons
Karma does not perish.
When the circumstances and the time arrive
Beings surely feel its effects.*

Since the subtle workings of karma can only be understood by someone who has reached enlightenment, the Buddha taught the law of karma by means of various stories which are collected in the following texts:

- a) **The Bases of Discipline (Vinaya-Vastu)**
- b) **The Sutra of the Wise and Foolish (Dama-muko-nama-sutra), and**
- c) **The Hundred Actions Sutra (Karma-sataka-sutra)**

A brief description of the criteria for powerful or weighty actions

The strength of actions is dependent on four factors:

1. Powerful in terms of the recipient
2. Powerful in terms of the support
3. Powerful in terms of the substance
4. Powerful in terms of the motivation

1. Powerful in terms of the recipient

Tibetan: ཞིང་གི་སྤོ་ནས་སྟོབས་ཆེ་བ། - *Zhing gi go nae tob che-wa* (*Zhing* = recipient/field, *gi* = genitive, *go nae* = in terms of/by way of, *tob che-wa* = powerful/strong)

The recipient, or literally the *field*, refers to the recipient of our actions. The most powerful recipients are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, our spiritual guides, Bodhisattvas, other beings who have spiritual realizations, and our parents.

With respect to the non-virtue of stealing, the Buddha explains in the **Mindfulness of the Excellent Teaching (Sad-dharmanumrty-upasthana)** that it is far worse to steal from the Sangha than to steal from the Buddha and the Dharma. Here the Sangha mainly refers to monks and nuns, or in a wider sense, to laypeople who have dedicated their lives to spiritual practice.

The reason for the greater non-virtue is that the Buddha and the Dharma do not need the substances we offer. The Sangha, on the other hand, traditionally lead a simple life with no income and meager possessions. Stealing from them would therefore interfere with their Dharma practice and indirectly harm all other sentient beings for the benefit of whom the Sangha works.